

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

### THE NATURE, FUNCTION, AND PURPOSE OF THE TERM שְׁאוֹל IN THE TORAH, PROPHETS, AND WRITINGS

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The fact that scholars depict Sheol either as the underworld where the dead continue their existence or simply the grave has resulted in contradictory conclusions, fierce polemic, and unremitting dispute. This lack of consensus makes it imperative to justify another approach that is more comprehensive in its entirety in comparison with the earlier attempts that sought to determine the meaning of the term "Sheol," mainly by exploring its etymology and various nonbiblical sources.

Unlike previous studies, this exegetical research systematically examines all the sixty-six references to the term "Sheol" in the Hebrew Bible by almost exclusively focusing on its nature, function, and purpose. Chapter 1 provides a concise outline of the whole dissertation. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 comprise the major exegetical block. Chapter 5 establishes the nature, function, and purpose of the term "Sheol" in the Hebrew Bible as a whole, and draws together anthropological and theological insights.

Repeatedly drawn conclusions that the term "Sheol" functions as a poetic synonym of the place of the dead were reached by exploring the nature, function, and purpose of the term "Sheol" and by taking into consideration its various degrees of interrelation with other death-related terminology, the strength of their links, their interconnections and interdependence in the concrete context. This organic system of terminological interdependence, where one concept inevitably influences and clarifies another, plays an extremely important role in determining the factual meaning of the term "Sheol."

Sheol represents the place of the dead, where both the dead righteous and the wicked go. No physical, mental, or spiritual activity is possible there because it is never linked with life or any kind of existence, but exclusively with death. Besides, the examination of the term "Sheol" reveals two opposing anthropological and theological systems or paradigms: the so-called popular view of a disembodied personal existence in Sheol and the scriptural paradigm, where at death the body becomes again the dust of the earth, but the spirit of life returns to God.

Finally, there is a slight but extremely important distinction between the "grave" (common noun) and the term "Sheol" (proper noun), which is rooted in their classification. Because Sheol may refer to a number of entities by means of common characteristics pertaining to the sphere of death, it may function as a pointer to any place of the dead, regardless of its location, form, content, or description, and that is why it is best to consider the term "Sheol" as a poetic designation of the grave.